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AUTHOR Shuy, Roger W.
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ABSTRACT

The study of language is an interdisciplinary field, since language can be seen to embody characteristics of psychology, linguistics, literature, sociology, anthropology, education, and the sciences. Teachers of language can no longer afford to ignore useful information from any of the underlying disciplines. If language teaching is to be assisted by these disciplines, the following conditions must be met: (1) the various fields involved must admit that they all have something to learn from each other; (2) these several fields must be willing to communicate their knowledge in such a way that it sees life from the learner's viewpoint; (3) they must meet other disciplines halfway; (4) they must be less concerned with internal orthodoxy and more about the long range success of their clients; and (5) they must realize they are all in a constant state of change. There is now evidence that the various academic fields are opening up to fresh ideas from allied disciplines. Thus, the task of joining linguistics with other fields in the service of foreign language instruction no longer seems farfetched. The advent of sociolinguistics has helped crystalize this interdisciplinary trend. Because of its focus on variability, sociolinguistics makes educators more aware of the importance of the setting and the lifestyle from which a student comes. (Author/PM)

Joining Linguistics With Other Fields in the Service of Foreign Language Teaching

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Roger W. Shuy
Georgetown University
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One of the healthy tendencies in education in the seventies is that it has been freed from its isolation from the academic fields from which it gets its substance. It is only an accident of history that causes such separations in the first place but eventually the cyclical nature of human thought tends to bring them back together again.

The separation of the fields of reading and linguistics, for example, came about not as the result of mutual hostility or willful ignorance, but rather it grew out of the simple sequencing of history. The need for reading instruction simply developed earlier than the academic field that could nourish it and it has taken a century for reading researchers and teachers to realize that reading is a language processing operation. Linguists, of course, were of little help to reading specialists, for a number of reasons. For one thing, the field of language is very large and it took quite a while for linguists to discover that reading was a part of it. Secondly, reading seemed, to many linguists, to be a mundanely simple applied field. It has not been the nature of linguists to appreciate either applied fields or simple questions. There are signs, nevertheless, which indicate that we are witnessing a reversal in this sterile relationship. The younger linguists are no longer as concerned about status in purely abstract theoretical matters. To be sure, they want theory, but they now want it to matter. Some of them are even interested in reading and it is my contention that both fields will benefit.

A great many famous separations in history have developed into troublesome paradoxes. The presumed separation of church and state has never been cleansed of its internal difficulties and the separation of executive and legislative power, derived from the writings of Locke and Montesquieu, has proved more than wearisome to the Nixon administration. In linguistics, the separation of

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language from the realistic context in which it is used has been equally difficult and every effort to preserve this separation has, in recent years, met with increasing disfavor. The view of linguistics which excludes the variational and functional aspects of language from formal linguistic analysis and describes such characteristics as trivial, mere performance, or relegates them to the semantic component is finding disfavor at a rapid pace. Ferdinand de Saussure's term static could be used to refer to the frameworks of both structural and transformational linguistics. By this term, we refer to the exclusion of variation of any sort, including time, function, socio-economic status, sex and ethnicity, from the purview of formal linguistic analysis. Thus, when Noam Chomsky states, "Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by performance variations." (1965:4), he is illustrating the static view of language quite succinctly. Thus linguists more or less abdicated any responsibility for studying many of the interesting things about language--the dynamic aspects--in a vain effort to be "purely linguistic", whatever that might mean.

Today, however, the separation of linguistics from other fields is definitely on the decline. The change has come about as a result of a number of factors, not the least of which is the fact that there is not much call for jobs in abstract linguistics these days. It has always been clear to some of us that linguistics is closely related to language (although there was a period in which the major focus seemed to be on a theory of theories rather than on a theory of language). It has been equally clear that the study of language is a microcosm of the academic world. That is, to separate language teaching from other fields is to create an unreal world which runs counter to what education is all about. Unless I have missed the point grossly, education is the putting together of various bits of knowledge acquired along the way. As such, it is process-oriented, not product-centered and one is reminded of the sage words of John Dewey who defined education as what is left after the facts are gone.

As a microcosm of the real world, language can be seen to embody essential characteristics of the fields of psychology, geography, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, literature, education and the sciences. Quite likely the study

of language could be the academic integrative factor in the classroom. By this I mean that if the essential requirement for effective education is seeing how everything fits together (in Dewey's sense), language study looks like the best instrument for doing so, since it partakes of so many different disciplines in its very ingredients. It is technical, yet humanistic. It is artistic, yet scientific. It is individual yet social. If ever a field offered a golden opportunity for realizing the Renaissance notion of the universal man, it is the study of language. One might conclude, in fact, that the study of language is, by definition, an interdisciplinary field and that teachers of language no longer have the luxury of ignoring useful information from any of the underlying disciplines.

One might begin the discussion of the joining of linguistics with other fields in the service of language teaching by asking what the nature of such a relationship might be. If language teaching is to build on other disciplines one might argue that the disciplines will have to stop changing at least long enough for us to get a fix on what they are. The main tenents of linguistics, psychology, sociology, for example, seem to be in a constant flux, frustrating any effort of an outsider to get a firm grasp on them. With respect to linguistics, for example, a constant complaint is that no sooner do we learn something about structural linguistics than transformational theory comes along and destroys all previous positions. Now we are witnessing the overthrow of transformational grammar by a combination of forces which argue for examining language in realistic social contexts and against the transformationalists separation of syntax from semantics.

It would appear that most of the mystery of linguistic theory grows out of the predisposition toward obscurity on the part of its proponents along with a predictable insecurity which seems to require that all simple prepositions be stated in extremely complex terms and formulas. A second source of the mystery stems from a natural tendency among "those who know" to keep "those who don't know" in the dark. The medical profession provides a classic example of this sort of behavior. Recently the National Hospital Association compiled a list of ten questions most often asked by patients. Leading the list was the question: "Why don't doctors explain a medical problem in simple language that a patient can understand?". In answer to this question, the famous heart surgeon Michael E. DeBakey replied: "Most doctors don't want their patients to under-

stand them! They prefer to keep their work a mystery. If patients don't understand what a doctor is talking about, they won't ask him questions. Then the dcotor won't have to be bothered answering them."

To counteract these obstacles to the adequate cross-fertilization of fields one might argue that language teachers keep regular tabs on the underlying disciplines and somehow devise ways of continually interacting with them. Both of these are largely attitudinal strategies whose success will depend on the diligence of the teacher. However important such strategies might be, there is little that can be done about them without individual commitment and without adequate translators of the more abstruse theoretical matters.

A much more difficult obstacle to overcome has been that of welding the contributors of the relevant disciplines into a coherent, unified, interdisciplinary theory and practice of language teaching. Language teachers, like linguists, do not have the luxury of retreating to an ivory tower to ruminate about a theory of language teaching. Language teaching brings one soberly into contact with the real world--one in which real learners in a real world have real motivations about a real language. Theory, of course, is important but a prime requisite of such learning is that it lead to reality.

If language teaching is to be assisted by the disciplines which underlie it, a number of conditions must be met. For one thing, the various fields involved will have to be vulnerable enough to admit that they each have something to learn from each other. Secondly, the several fields wishing to benefit from cross-fertilization must be willing to communicate their knowledge in such a way that it sees life from the learner's viewpoint, not just their own. Third, the various disciplines must be willing to venture outside of their own safe territory in order to meet other disciplines half-way. Fourth, the individual academic fields will need to worry less about internal orthodoxy and more about the long range success of their clients. Fifth, the various fields will need to realize that they are all in a constant state of change and that to know the benefits of a field today in no way guarantees such knowledge tomorrow.

Happily, the times are ripe for meeting all of these conditions. The cyclical nature of the academic world seems to be bringing us back from the days of isolative ignorance and willful separation to a renewed predisposition

for interdisciplinary studies. The major argument against such studies has been that they lead to a watering down of education and the end product was supposedly less than the sum of its parts, a kind of academic fruit salad. This criticism was especially strong among linguists, particularly those who were busily establishing the dignity of their field by demeaning other disciplines in the process. Such a procedure is common among academics, whose major division at times seems to be establishing sharp boundary lines between what is their field and what is not. For over a decade, while certain strides were made in establishing the theoretical strengths of linguistics, the field removed itself farther and farther away from the real world and it is only within the past five or six years that we have seen a convergence of interests on the part of linguists interested in language variation and dialects, of pidgins and creole specialists, of generative semanticists, and ethnographers of communication.

Led by William Labov, a group of scholars in the sixties interested in variation in American English began to discover some new dimensions of systematic variation.[1] Past studies in American dialectology had described wide-meshed variation but had not accounted for it systematically. Using techniques borrowed largely from sociology, anthropology and psychology, Labov clearly demonstrated that ideolects lack the systematicity to be found in the grammar of a speech community and that gradient analysis yielded drastically different results from that provided by binary oppositions. Thus it became important to know not just whether or not a speaker produced a given sound or grammatical structure but the circumstances under which that form was produced (linguistic and psycho-sociological) as well as the frequency of occurrence of that form in relationship to consistent, comparable measures. Not all such scholars agreed with each other on the exact nature of this gradience, but the excitement generated by the notion quickly led to an alignment with creole scholars such as William Stewart, who in 1964 presented his formulation of a continuum with an acrolect at one end and a basilect at the other (Stewart 1964:10-18). By this Stewart meant to indicate that speech communities could be plotted on a broad continuum rather than at artificial polarities such as standard or non-standard per se. Creolists had long argued that pidgins and creoles, languages which are under construction and are therefore dynamic, offered the best opportunity to see how language actually works.

At about the same time, the merging concerns of variationists and creolists were joined by a group of transformationalists who were becoming disenchanged, among other things, by the static nature of their premises. James McCawley, Paul Postal, Robin and George Lakoff, Charles Fillmore, John Ross and others began to raise objections against transformational syntax, noting its inability to accommodate real language, its failure to take into account that language is used by human beings to communicate in a social context and its claim that syntax can be separated from semantics.[2] These scholars, who are now referred to as generative semanticists, see variation as heavily involved in grammar whenever the social context of a discourse changes. One might dismiss the sentence, "Ernie thinks with a fork", as ungrammatical unless one knew that such a sentence is a response to the question, "How do you eat potatoes?". In her work on politeness, Robin Lakoff demonstrates the importance of context when she notes that when one addressses a child, "You may do so-and-so" it is politer than "You must do so-and-so". But in addressing a dignitary a party, the hostess who says "You must have a piece of cake" is politer than one who says, "You may have a piece of cake" (Lakoff 1972:907-927).

All of this recent emphasis on social context by variationists, creolists and generative semanticists was, of course, old hat to ethnographers of communication. Dell Hymes had been arguing for a realistic description of language for many years, observing that institutions, settings, scenes, activities and various sociocultural realities give order to such analysis.[3] An ethnographic approach to speech requires that the analyst have information about the relative statuses of the interlocutors, the setting of the speech act, the message, the code (including gestures), the situation, the topic, the focus and the presuppositions that are paired with sentences. At long last, the ethnographers of communication are beginning to get some help from linguists with other primary specializations.

The upshot of all of this ferment within the past few years has been an almost entirely new set of attitudes within the field of linguistics. It is difficult to describe linguistics at any point in its history as being settled with an orthodoxy but some broad, general movements can be discerned with hind-

sight. In the forties and fifties we saw a structuralist emphasis, with a focus on phonology, a concern for the word and a philosophical framework which was positivistic and empirical. In the sixties we witnessed the transformationalist era, with a focus on syntax, a concern for the sentence and a philosophical framework which was rationalistic or idealistic, with innate knowledge and intuition playing a prominent role in analysis.

As C.-J. Bailey (1973) points out, in the seventies we are now entering a new period with an emphasis on discourse and a philosophical framework which is dynamic rather than idiolectal. He refers to it as the lectological epoch. It is characterized, of course, by the concerns noted before by the variationists, ethnographers, generative semanticists and creolists.

The result of this ferment in linguistics is that in order to be a linguist today one must know a good bit about anthropological, philosophical and psychological matters if one is to deal with, among other things, the language contexts, presuppositions and attitudes which we now deem necessary for adequately analyzing language. In the process we feel a need to know something about statistics, psychological models, sociology and pedagogy if we are really concerned about the field of linguistics.

Meanwhile, there is also evidence that other academic fields are also opening up to fresh ideas from allied disciplines. There is a renewed interest in language acquisition and teaching among psychologists and in sociolinguistic concerns among anthropologists, if recent conventions and journals are accurate indicators of attention. The major point to be made here is that we seem to be living in a period in which it is becoming fashionable to do some reading and thinking in the formerly forbidden fields of alien disciplines and, consequently, the task of joining linguistics with other fields in the service of foreign language teaching may not now be as far fetched as it once seemed. The advent of sociolinguistics has helped crystalize this interdisciplinary trend and, as far as I can see, it has all been to the good.

With the relatively recent developments in sociolinguistics we have come a bit closer to the sorts of problems which also concern the schools. Because of its focus on variability, sociolinguistics makes a better match with the setting in which a child can be found than its recent predecessors did. Most

children in the U. S. are surrounded by people who speak with variation which stems from differences in social status, geography, sex, age and style. They are faced with conflicting pressures to conform to the norms of their peers, their parents, their school and their region. Often they are placed in conflict with a value system which contrasts to that of the school. In addition, some children are in conflict with the language and culture of textbooks and instructional strategies, and the mismatch between their lifestyles and those of the educational process is too great for them to overcome. They may be placed in further conflict by developments of minority awareness which may militate against school or majority norms in a way in which they may become politically involved to their own disadvantage.

One outgrowth of this new interdisciplinary perspective on language teaching is manifested in a concern for the functions of language in the classroom. Of primary importance in both native and foreign language teaching is the recognition that a number of varieties of language exist and that any one may be more appropriate than any other at a given point in time. It is important for teachers to learn early on that it is probably as appropriate to play football in non-standard language as it is to produce standard language in the classroom. What this suggests is that a language learner, for complex reasons which grow out of his peer relationships and other contextual clues, may deliberately decide to use a stigmatized feature in his speech. When we realize that language learning may be plotted on a continuum rather than as a right-wrong polarity, such usage tends to be realistic and sensible. Such a continuum for an English monolingual who is learning French may be schematized as follows:

Let it be observed, first of all, that the number of stages is infinite and most certainly not ten. This is only meant to be suggestive of the slide from one end to the other. Of particular importance is that not one of the numbered stages is totally French but that number nine is much closer than number five. It is

quite likely that the errors made at stage one are of a different order of predictability than those of stage ten. It has been hypothesized, in fact, that it is quite natural for learners of a language to produce errors of a certain type at one stage and errors of a different type at another. In fact, evidence of such errors can be taken as progress in the acquisition of the desired forms.[5] One might even speculate that teaching materials could be developed which have as their goal the progressive development of language learners from one stage of acceptable error making (i. e. learning) to another.

Once we dispose of the notion of the right-wrong polarity evaluation and conceive of language as a continuum which operates in realistic contexts, the possibility of selectional options becomes meaningful. It is conceivable, for example, that a speaker out of a number of possible motivations, may select forms which, in some other context, would be considered stigmatized. Detailed studies of language variation have only begun to scratch the surface of such gradatums but several examples are suggestive of fruitful avenues of future research.

For example, I can clearly remember that as a child in a blue-collar industrial community, certain language restrictions were operational among pre-adolescent boys. To be an acceptable member of the peer group, it was necessary to learn and to execute appropriate rules for emphasizing one's masculinity. If a boy happened to be the toughest boy in the class, he had few worries for whatever else he did would be offset by this fact. Those who were not the toughest could establish masculinity in a number of ways, many of which are well recognized. For example, the use of tough language, expecially swearing, and adult vices, such as smoking, were sometimes effective means of obtaining such status. Likewise, if a boy were a good athlete, he could easily establish himself as masculine (in our society this was true only for football, basketball and baseball and not for sports such as swimming, soccer or tennis). On the other hand, a boy could clearly obtain negative points by having a non-sex-object relationship with a girl, by liking his sister, by playing certain musical instruments (especially piano and violin) and by outwardly appearing to be intelligent in the classroom. It is the latter avenue which is of interest to us here since the major instrument for adjusting ones outward

appearance of intelligence was his use of oral language. Interestingly enough, what one did with written language seemed less crucial, as long as it remained a private communication between teacher and student. That is, a boy could be as smart as he wanted on a test or an essay as long as the written document did not become public (i. e. become displayed on the bulletin board).

Thus two strategies for reasonably intelligent males in this society were as follows:

a. Keep your mouth shut in class. If the male is white, this might be interpreted as shyness. If he is Black, it is usually read as non-verbality. The strategy of keeping one's mouth shut in school is employed for different reasons at different times. In early elementary school the child soon learns that the name of the game is to be right as often as possible and wrong as seldom as possible. One way to prevent being criticized by the teacher is to keep one's mouth shut. By pre-adolescence, the male's strategy for keeping his mouth shut grows out of a complex set of pressures stemming from stereotyped expectations of masculine behavior (i. e. boys are less articulate than girls and less interested in school) and the inherent dangers of appearing unmasculine to one's peers.

b. If you give the right answer, counteract the "fink effect" by sprinkling your response with stigmatized language. It is this strategy which boys who are to survive the education process in certain speech communities must certainly master. Those who only keep their mouths shut tend to drop out ultimately for whatever reasons. But males who learn to adjust to the conflicting pressures of school and peer pressures are those who have learned to handle the sociolinguistic continuum effectively. In the proper context and with the proper timing, an intelligent male can learn how to give the answer that the teacher wants in such a way that his peers will not think him a sissy. In language class he will learn how to produce the accepted forms with the subtle nuances of intonation and kinesics which signal to his peers that rather than copping out, he is merely

playing the game, humoring the teacher along. If he appears to be sufficiently bored, he can be allowed to utter the correct response. If he stresses the sentence improperly, he can be spared the criticism of selecting the accurate verb form. It is tempting to postulate that the male's need to counteract the "fink effect" by deliberately selecting stigmatized language forms is merely a working class phenomenon. Recent personal observations, however, have led me to question such a notion. My teen-aged son has lived his entire life in a middle-class, Standard English speaking environment but it is only since he began playing on a football team that he has developed a small number of non-standard English features. The production of these features, which include multiple negation and d for th in words like these and them, is situationally confined to the present or abstract condition of football. He appears to use the standard English equivalents in all non-football contexts. Closer observation seems to indicate that not all members of the football team feel the same requirement. It would seem, in fact, that there are different pressures for different roles. My son is a defensive tackle, a position which seems to require the characteristics of an agressive ape. Thus, apprentice apes must do everything possible to establish this condition. It is interesting to observe that pressure to select non-standard forms seems less evident among quarterbacks and flankers.

A second recent observation has to do with the diagnosis of reading problems in an affluent suburb. A well meaning third grade teacher has diagnosed one boy's reading problem as one of "small motor coordination" and she suggested that the parents send him to a neurologist at once. His father, a physician, objected strenuously muttering something about teachers practicing medicine without a license. Since I knew the family, I was asked to help discover the child's real problem. After a quick and dirty examination in which the boy evidenced little or no problem with decoding or comprehending material which was unknown to him, the only problem I discovered

was that his reading was monotonous and mechanical. In the school's terminology, he did not read with "expression". A hasty survey of teachers revealed that boys tend not to read with expression, a fact which is generally accepted along with their non-verbality and dirty fingernails. Why didn't this boy read with expression? My hypothesis is that he considers it sissy. This boy is the smallest male in his class and he is using every means possible to establish his masculinity. In athletics what he lacks in skill he more than makes up for with careless abandon. His voice is coarse. His demeanor is tough. He swears regularly. And so on. It would behoove the schools to do several things here. One might question the usefulness of reading with expression at all, but teachers should certainly be able to distinguish this presumed problem from other types of reading problems, particularly neurological ones. But this seems to be evidence of the same sort of pressure, this time in a middle-class community, which pits school norms against peer norms to the extent that the child is willing to deliberately select the non-standard forms.

The significance of these illustrations for foreign language teaching should be obvious. The major implications are as follows. The multidisciplinary concept of the language continuum suggests that not all errors are alike and that some may actually be clear evidence of positive stages in the acquisition of the language. Language acquisition literature from psychology and linguistics suggests that this is the case. Such research shows that small children tend to regularize the past tense of irregular (strong) verbs--'comed', 'breaked', 'goed', 'doed' and so on. Regularization of this type continued into elementary school for some children. From a traditional psychological perspective one might expect to find that children begin by using some regular (weak) forms correctly--like 'walked', 'helped' and so on--and that they then overextend this rule to the strong verbs. In actuality, however, the situation is different. In all of the cases which have been studied, the earliest past tenses are the correct forms of irregular verbs--'came', 'broke', 'went' and so on. Apparently these irregular verbs in the past tense--which are the more frequently used past tense forms in adult speech--are learned

as separate vocabulary items at a very early age. Subsequently, as soon as the child learns only one or two regular past tense forms, he replaces the correct irregular past tense forms with the incorrect overgeneralizations from the regular forms. Thus, children actually say 'it came', 'it broke' and 'he did it' before they say 'it comed', 'it breaked' and 'he doed it'. The crucial point here is that the irregular verbs, though they are frequent, are each unique--they do not follow a pattern, and evidently it is patterns to which children are sensitive.

The schools have not generally taken advantage of this sort of over-regularization either an an indication of an acquired stage in the development fo acceptable language learning or as a positive indication that the speaker actually knows something in order to produce such a form. The usual school attitude of correct or incorrect polarity toward error-making often discourages such insights. Mistake-making is seldom valued in the schools, and teachers soon learn to correct any errors that their children may make. This is incredibly short sighted, since not all errors are alike and many evidence more creativity and cognitive ability than the presumed correct ones. My son evidenced such creativity once when asked where Australia got its name. He pondered a minute, reflecting that the country was settled by prisoners who were ostracized by the British, and explained that Australia was derived from ostracized. It was a creative answer which just happened to be wrong. The classic example of a virtuous error is the widely-told story of the physics student who, when asked how to measure the height of a building using a barometer, replied that he would go to the owner of the building and say, "If you'll tell me how tall your building is, I'll give you a barometer". Children experiment with language in much the same way. They try new combinations, they hypercorrect, they regularize irregular verbs and many other creative and highly cognitive schemes. Perhaps the schools would do well to recognize different types of errors for what they frequently are--evidence of high intelligence. In any case, it should be clear that hypercorrection may well be stigmatizing in one sense while evidence of creativity, intelligence or the natural developmental process in another.

The preceeding examples of language learning behavior are clear beacons of the combined efforts of a number of academic fields in identifying,

understanding and prescribing for language learning. The effects of the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, linguistics and education are clearly visible in the attempt to set the language learning in a realistic context.

But know about learning style, variability, peer pressure, presupposition and context is still not enough. We still have to face what is probably the most perplexing problem of all foreign language teaching: "How is it that some people learn a foreign language quickly and expertly while others with the same opportunities are utter failures?". The typical response by a language teacher is that the answer is found either in a methodology or in an innate "knack" or "ear" for languages. The twelve-year research project of R. C. Gardner and Wallace Lambert is beginning to reveal that the successful language learner must be psychologically ready to adopt certain aspects of behavior which characterize members of the target language. The language learner's motivation grows out of his attitude toward the target people, toward foreigners in general and toward the learning task. Using dozens of measures over several years Gardner and Lambert (1973) conclude that the best language learning is integrative (being accepted as a member of the target group) rather than instrumental (utiliitarian). People with strong ethnocentric or authoritarian attitudes who are prejudiced toward foreign peoples are unlikely to be integrative. Put even more simply, super-patriotic types are poor language learners.

Gardner and Lambert also investigated the learning effects of the presence of a community of native French speakers in Maine and Louisiana and concluded that the presence of such speakers is not enough to motivate monolingual English speakers to learn French. A complex set of variables seems to be at work, not the least of which is the prestige commanded by the local French speaking community. If the local French speakers are held in low esteem, there is little motivation for learning the language. In contrast, the primary motivation for learning French in Hartford, Connecticut where no discernible French speaking community exists, seems to correlate strongly with the learner's willingness to abandon his American identity in an almost unpatriotic fashion and associate himself with France (not with French Canada or Louisiana).

Equally important in this study is the conclusion that we cannot predict from knowledge of a student's intelligence or language learning aptitute scores

what his attitudes or motivations in language learning will be. The authors argue, instead, that language learning stems from a highly complex number of factors which are interrelated in different ways in different settings. Motivation in Maine seems to grow out of identification with the French teacher and depends, in part, on the student's sensitivity to other people. Strong parental encouragement is the key factor in Louisiana where the French speaking community seems to be dwindling.

Standardized tests in foreign language study are given a severe blow by the Gardner and Lambert study, in which it is indicated that it is difficult to get a true reading of the aptitudes of ethnic minorities when one uses tests standardized for monolingual and monocultural subjects. Both the Maine and Louisiana French-Americans did decidedly poorer than the English speaking students on the Modern Language Aptitude Test.

Thus, once again, even in the psychological perspective of language teaching, many interdisciplinary factors are brought to bear. It is becoming increasingly difficult to be a specialist in any one field these days, for the academic disciplines have a way of spilling over into each other with what appears to be wreckless abandon. Clearly what is wrong with the field of education is that it has conceived of itself as a separate and monolithic field. Clearly this cannot be, for the content fields most certainly are the stuff of what is being taught. Equally clear is the fact that linguistics is not and cannot be an island unto itself, separated from the context which feeds it not only with useful applications but also with theoretical stimulation. Foreign Language Teaching is perhaps the most vulnerable field of all, however, if it were to secede from the academic union, for its dependence on realistic input from linguistics, psychology, anthropology, sociology and education, to mention the major fields, is exceedingly great. A well-balanced language teacher is either also a psychologist, a linguist, an educator and a social scientist or he is a mere automaton who can be replaced by a computerized program. Chances are, the language teacher has always realized this but has been frustrated at the overwhelming nature of the job. The related disciplines have made it difficult for "outsiders" to be indoctrinated and the magnitude of the task seemed overwhelming hopeless. But current trends in academia have suddenly put us all in the same boat and the

barriers are beginning to break down. The language teacher suddenly is discovered to have possessed the diamond all along--the realistic context, with real children learning real language. This is an advantage highly to be prized. Since you have it, the underlying disciplines will have to be a little nicer, a whole lot clearer and a great deal more humble. For, after all, they need you too.

NOTES:

[1] See, for example, William Labov, The social motivation of a sound change, Word 19:273-309 (1963).

[2] For an account of the effects of social situation on formal grammar, see Charles Fillmore, A grammarian looks to sociolinguistics, in R. Shuy (ed.), Sociolinguistics, current trends and prospects, Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press (1973).

[3] One might cite many references over a period of time. For a recent overview, however, see Dell Hymes, The scope of sociolinguistics, in R. Shuy (ed.), Sociolinguistics: current trends and prospects, Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press (1973).

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